

CONFIDENCE IN THE BIBLE—PART ONE THE FACTS

Jude 14-15

"And Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied about them: 'Look! The Lord comes with thousands of His holy ones¹⁵ to execute judgment on all and to convict them of all their ungodly acts that they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things ungodly sinners have said against Him.'"

INTRODUCTION

How much faith do you have in the Bible? Are you not putting your life on the line by how much you believe or deny that what is written in the Bible about God, His rules for living, **Jesus** Christ, and Heaven and Hell, are totally true? A Christian barber became convicted he should share his faith more often with his customers. The next morning, he arose and prayed, "Lord, today I'm going to witness to the first man who walks through my door." Soon after he opened his shop, a man came in saying, "I want a shave." The barber said, "Sure, just sit in this chair and I'll be with you in a moment." He went into the back room for desperate prayer. "God, the first customer has come in. Please give me the wisdom so I'll know just the right thing to say to him. Amen." The barber quickly came out with his Bible in one hand, picked up his razor in the other hand, and said, "Good morning sir. I have a question for you. Are you prepared to die?"

The writing known as *I Enoch*, cited by **Jude 14-15**, had more popularity among believers of the first century who were expecting Christ's immediate Second Coming than the *Left Behind* series of our day. It claimed as its author one of the godliest, most mysterious persons mentioned in the Old Testament. *I Enoch 106* describes the birth of one of the best-known people in the Bible. As you listen, please decide if this passage appears to be as inspired by the Holy Spirit as everything in **Genesis**:

And his body was white as snow and red as a rose; the hair of his head as white as wool . . . ; and as for his eyes, when he opened them the whole house glowed like the sun. . . . And when he arose from the hands of the midwife, he opened his mouth and spoke to the Lord with righteousness. And his father [Lamech] was afraid of him . . . and went to his father [Methuselah]; and he said to him, "I have begotten a strange son: He is not like an ordinary human being, but he looks like the children of the angels of heaven. . . . I fear that a wondrous phenomenon may take place upon the earth in his days."

This is how Noah's birth is described. Many first-century Jews and Christians believed all or much of *I Enoch* was revealed to the Enoch of **Genesis 5:23-24**: "So Enoch's life lasted 365 years.²⁴ Enoch walked with God; then he was not there because God took him." Enoch and Elijah were the only two people in Old Testament times taken directly to heaven without dying first, just like Christians will experience in the Rapture at Christ's Second Coming (**I Thessalonians 4:16-17**). But does this passage from *I Enoch* sound like the Holy Spirit inspired it? No. Yet, **Jude** quotes from *I Enoch* and applies these words to **Jesus** and the judgment nonchristians will receive at His Second Coming. Does this mean our Bible is a mixture of fables and facts, as many claim, just as *I Enoch* consists of both facts and fables? How reliable is our Bible? This is the key question we'll begin to explore in a series entitled Confidence in the Bible.

I. THE URGENCY OF THIS QUESTION

If you were asked how confident are you that you are on good terms with your Creator, how would you respond? Are you absolutely certain your violations are forgiven of how a God of perfect love and goodness expects you to behave toward Him and your fellow human beings? Are you fully assured you will be welcomed into His Heavenly home of everlasting peace and joy instead of being condemned to everlasting misery and torment when your time on Earth is done? Unless we have full confidence God divinely inspired the truths and teachings of the Bible, our answers to these questions are based merely upon wishful thinking, like the mere 6% of Americans who believe they will be condemned to Hell, or people of other religious beliefs than Christianity who believe they can earn God's love and forgiveness by good deeds.

The spiritual battleground in anyone's mind, in any family, or in any society, is always our confidence in the authority and trustworthiness of the Bible. Since 2011, Christian researcher George Barna has partnered with the American Bible Society to create annual *State of the Bible* reports that are based upon more than 14,000 interviews. In May 2016, he released *The Bible in America* to commemorate the American Bible Society's bicentennial. This report reveals America's confidence in the Bible has decreased alarmingly in just the past six years. In 2011, nearly half of our adults (48%) strongly agreed with the statement, "The Bible is totally accurate in all of the principles it teaches." Today, this number has shrunk to 33%; just one-third of our citizens. And the percentage of those who strongly disagree with this statement has nearly doubled in just six years (from 12% to 23%). In 2011, less than a fourth (23%) of Americans disagreed strongly or somewhat with the statement, "The Bible contains everything a person needs to know to live a meaningful life." Today, a full third of our people (33%) express such skepticism toward the value of the Bible's truths. This number rises to 40% of younger Americans born after 1980.

George Barna's findings are consistent with two major trends now reshaping how Americans view the Bible. First, in a society that venerates science and rationalism, it's an increasingly hard pill to swallow that an eclectic assortment of ancient stories, poems, sermons, prophecies and letters, written and compiled over the course of 3,000 years, is somehow the sacred "word of God." In the few years Barna has been conducting *State of the Bible* interviews, the percent of Americans who believe the Bible is "just another book written by men" is increasing. The perception is also growing that the Bible is actually harmful and the people who live by its principles are religious extremists. Our response to this trend as grateful and faithful followers of our Lord and Savior **Jesus Christ** is that we would rather live and die being extremely right about the Bible's authority and trustworthiness than to live and die being extremely wrong about the Bible!

The second trend reshaping how Americans view the Bible is that our society has generally embraced self-fulfillment as the ultimate measure of moral good. Americans increasingly reject external sources of moral authority, including civil laws and Biblical laws. Our internal Self has become the spiritual and moral compass for the vast majority of adults, including many professed Christians. In stark contrast to people who embrace self-fulfillment as the highest good, the Bible insists God's moral order best promotes the flourishing of society and individuals. Yet, how many who claim Christ is their Savior today ignore the Bible's clear teachings on such matters as how much God detests any blurring of how distinctly He created us "male and female," including conduct and dress (**Genesis 1:27; Deuteronomy 22:5; I Corinthians 6:9-11**), God abhors any sexual activity, even thoughts, outside of marriage (**Job 31:1-2; Matthew 5:27-28; I Corinthians 6:18-20; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5**); God condemns dishonesty of every kind, whether by action or word (**Exodus 20:15; Proverbs 6:16-19; Colossians 3:5-10; Revelation 22:14-15**), and the Lord God so "hates divorce" that He permits it under only extreme circumstances and forbids the divorced from ever remarrying except under rare exceptions of adultery, abandonment by an unbeliever, or the divorce occurring prior to our commitment to Christ (**Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; Matthew 18:3-12; Luke 16:18; I Corinthians 7:10-16; II Corinthians 5:17**)?

Loss of confidence in the trustworthiness of the Bible, and the loss of respect for the Bible's authority among professed Christians, have both contributed to the startling reality that nearly a fourth of Americans (23%; 56 million) are now classified as "nones"; people who self-identify as atheists or agnostics, or say their religion is "nothing in particular" (up from 16% in 2007). Another 25% of all adults (61 million) prefer "alternative" religious experiences: holistic healing, meditation, spiritualism, pagan, occult, or magical practices. Trends to reject religious belief or to turn to pre-Christian, Satanically-inspired religious practices are growing most rapidly among the nation's youth, though 70% are still given some Christian training as children. Tragically, nearly two-thirds of those raised in evangelical homes permanently walk away from the Church after they graduate high school. One main reason is they were not trained to answer questions about the Bible's accuracy and authority. When they are confronted for the first time with what appear to be serious objections to the Bible, their "faith" often collapses like a house of cards. It is urgent

to provide youth and all believers with cogent answers to the common questions raised against the Bible they will encounter in their schools and in today's often godless society.

II. THE COGENCY OF THE ANSWERS

"Cogency" refers to the how persuasive or convincing the answers to a question are. Today, you will be given solid and scientific evidence what the Bible teaches about any subject is thoroughly and necessarily true. The Apostle Peter addressed many of the concerns Jude did. To assure believers of the facts supporting the Christian faith, he wrote in **II Peter 1:16** (NKJV), "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." His certainty of the facts about **Jesus** were based upon what he'd personally seen and heard; not hearsay. Peter exhorts us to trust the Bible to guide us into a true relationship with the Lord, despite confusing naysayers. "With our own eyes we saw His greatness. We were there when He was given honor and glory by God the Father, when the voice came to Him from the Supreme Glory, saying, 'This is My own dear Son, with whom I am pleased!' We ourselves heard this voice coming from heaven, when we were with Him on the holy mountain. So we are even more confident of the message proclaimed by the prophets. You will do well to pay attention to it, because it is like a lamp shining in a dark place until the Day dawns and the light of the morning star [as **Jesus** calls Himself in **Revelation 22:16**] shines in your hearts" (**II Peter 1:16b-19**, GNT).

But what about Jude including a prophecy about **Jesus'** Second Coming from a book claiming to have been written by the Biblical Enoch, even though Enoch did not write it, it was not written earlier than 200 B.C., and it contained some fictional material? Does this not mean some of the Bible might be fictional? These are important questions, which God encourages us to ask, and for which there are cogent answers.

First, long before the first alphabets, how do you think people preserved the record of important facts and events? Not by written tradition but by *oral* tradition. Moses, around 1400 B.C., wrote most of what's found in the Bible's first five books, including laws God revealed to him at that time. But Moses also set in writing stories of the world's Creation and of mankind's earliest beginnings handed down by oral tradition. God's Spirit guided him in sifting fictional embellishments that had crept in over time from true facts. This is what happened with Enoch's prophecy. Faithfully handed down by oral tradition, it found its way into *I Enoch* written by an unknown person at least 4,000 years later. God's Spirit guided Jude to retrieve with precision from *I Enoch* the one fact consistent with everything else we find recorded in the Bible by God's inspiration, while discarding *I Enoch's* fictional embellishments of Biblical truth.

The question most often raised by the modern world about the reliability of the Bible concerns how life, particularly human life, began on this planet. One day a zoo-keeper found an orangutan reading two books: the Bible and Darwin's *Origin of Species*. Surprised, he asked the ape, "Why are you reading those books?" "Well," said the orangutan, "I just wanted to know if I was my brother's keeper or my keeper's brother." Of the two main competing explanations for the existence of life on planet earth, one says God is necessary, as the Bible claims, and we are accountable to follow His moral laws. The other says God is unnecessary and morality, right and wrong, changes with public opinion. This latter explanation is often named "evolution." Its most famous proponent since his 1859 book, *The Origin of Species*, is Charles Darwin. Darwin based evolution on the theory complex life forms develop gradually over great periods of time from previous life forms that are so simple that chance and circumstance could explain their origin sufficiently.

Darwin's Black Box (1996), a book by biochemist Michael Behe, reveals Charles Darwin admitted his entire theory of simpler life forms evolving over time into more complex ones "would absolutely break down" if any of the simplest living organisms were ever proven to be so "irreducibly complex" they could not have resulted from a series of "numerous, successive, slight modifications." This would prove that an organizing Designer, God's creative hand, is the only logical explanation for the existence of life on Earth.

Isn't this what true science has proven? Two Greek philosophers of the 5th cent. B.C. (Democritus and Leucippus) proposed matter consisted of tiny invisible and indivisible particles they called atoms (in Greek, "a-tomos" means "not divisible"). The more powerful microscopic instruments become, the more we learn of the irreducibly complex nature of supposedly indivisible atoms. They were found to be composed of electrons in 1897, protons in 1918, and neutrons in 1932. More recently, we've learned atoms also consist of fermions, quarks, leptons, bosons, and gluons. All particles are necessary for even a single atom to exist; none were gradually added to an atom's makeup over time. Each subatomic particle must interact with precision engineering to keep atoms, the building blocks of all matter, from collapsing into nothingness.

If we turn from atoms to living cells, science tells us one of the seven essential characteristics of living matter is the ability to organize simple substances into complex ones. How did cells gain this organizing ability if not from God? The most daunting problem with a naturalistic explanation of the origin of life is the impossibility of mindless physical elements arranging themselves into complex, functioning organisms. Evolutionists want us to accept our planet Earth randomly produced all essential parts of living cells and each part fits and works together in just the right way for cells to exist just by chance. But the simplest one-celled organisms, as amoebae, require a membrane to protect them from the environment and an incredibly complex list of components, including the nucleus, chromosomes, ribosomes, mitochondria, vacuoles, centrioles, chloroplasts, cytoplasm, lysosomes, and a Golgi apparatus often compared to a post office inside the cell because it modifies, sorts, and packages proteins to be secreted. Each part of a cell would have no purpose and no ability to exist by itself, so the cell itself would never exist.

Michael Behe uses a mousetrap to simplify what evolutionists want us to believe. A mousetrap has five components: a platform, spring, hammer, holding bar, and catch. Each component has no purpose or function by itself, and each component requires that it be properly sized and arranged with the mousetrap's other four parts to function well enough for it to be retained rather than discarded as useless. Would you keep a mouse trap around that was missing parts and wouldn't work? Neither would natural selection, the supposed driving force behind evolution, retain a cell with missing parts. Unless all cell parts were brought into existence at the same time and were properly arranged for the cell to function well enough to survive, which only God's intelligence could have achieved, each part would have been discarded by natural selection. Thus, no living cells and no human beings would ever have existed in a godless world!

CONCLUSION

What did Peter say when describing the solid basis upon which Christianity stands? "[W]e did not follow cunningly devised fables." Are there people today who prefer to follow cunningly devised fables rather than place their confidence in what the Bible teaches about our Creator and our responsibilities toward Him? Yes. **Psalm 14:1** (NLT) tells us, "Only fools say in their hearts, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, and their actions are evil." Benjamin Franklin once appropriately remarked, "The learned fool writes his nonsense in better language than the unlearned, but still 'tis nonsense."

A chieftain of the New Hebrides islands east of Australia once sat peacefully reading the Bible. A French trader found him and said to him, "Bah, why are you reading the Bible? I suppose the missionaries have got hold of you, you poor fool. Throw it away! The Bible never did anybody any good." This chieftain replied calmly, "If it wasn't for this Bible, you'd be in my kettle there by now!" The Bible's worst critics today need to realize they risk destroying themselves, and many of society's benefits they are taking for granted, by their foolishness.